Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.
Including the excluded: Exploring perspectives of preventing disciplinary exclusion from school from the lived experience of students

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
in
Education

at Massey University, Palmerston North
New Zealand

Leanne Katherine Romana

2017
Abstract

Disciplinary exclusion from school is experienced by some of the most vulnerable young people, and the challenges of preventing it are well documented. The literature on preventing disciplinary exclusion has primarily focused on positive alternatives to it, however there have been no studies in New Zealand that explore the prevention of disciplinary exclusion from the perspective of those with lived experience of it. This research aims to contribute to this gap in the knowledge base about what could work to prevent disciplinary exclusion.

The study focuses on 14 young people from around New Zealand who have experienced disciplinary exclusion. Using a qualitative research design and a preventative approach to establish what could work to prevent disciplinary exclusion, data was collected via focus group interviews with young people attending Youth Guarantee Fees-Free programmes to obtain their perspectives.

Using thematic analysis, participants’ lived experiences of disciplinary exclusion were captured through three emergent themes – school factors, classroom factors and personal factors. Themes were interpreted to explore how participants experienced disciplinary exclusion, and how these experiences informed the emergence of insightful possibilities – possibilities for preventing the disciplinary exclusion of other students from schools.

The implications of the findings are discussed in relation to the changes and improvements required to prevent disciplinary exclusion. It is proposed that ‘including the excluded’ may reveal to us potential avenues for further inquiry.
First, I would like to express my gratitude to the young people who gave generously to this study with their time and the insights they shared, both with me and with one another. I would also like to acknowledge the Youth Guarantee Fees-Free providers who worked alongside me to bring together the young people who participated in this study. And thank you to those community groups who provided safe spaces for me to meet with participants and conduct the focus group interviews. I am extremely grateful to you all.

Second, I thank my two supervisors, Vijaya Dharan and Tony Carusi, for their diligence, encouragement and unwavering support over the past two years. I am grateful to you both for the time and energy you gave to my research efforts, for the laughs, and for the invaluable knowledge you both imparted to me.

Third, I express my gratitude to others within the Institute of Education at Massey University who frequently went above and beyond to support me in my study endeavours.

Finally, I would like to thank my partner, my children and my parents for their endless patience and support during my time as a student. It has been a challenging journey and I would not have been able to complete my research without you all.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ................................................................................................................................. i

Acknowledgements ................................................................................................................ ii

Table of Contents ................................................................................................................... iii

List of figures ......................................................................................................................... iv

Chapter One: Introduction ...................................................................................................... 1
  1.0 Introduction ..................................................................................................................... 1
  1.1 Disciplinary exclusion ................................................................................................... 1
  1.2 Preventing disciplinary exclusion ............................................................................... 2
  1.3 Researcher’s position .................................................................................................... 3
  1.4 Conclusion ..................................................................................................................... 3

Chapter Two: Literature Review .............................................................................................. 5
  2.0 Introduction ..................................................................................................................... 5
  2.1 Inclusion, exclusion and disciplinary exclusion ............................................................ 5
      2.1.1 Social inclusion and inclusion in school ................................................................. 6
      2.1.2 Social exclusion and exclusion from school ......................................................... 7
      2.1.3 Disciplinary exclusion ......................................................................................... 9
  2.2 Legislative context of disciplinary exclusion ................................................................. 10
      2.2.1 International context of disciplinary exclusion ................................................... 10
      2.2.2 Legislative context of disciplinary exclusion in NZ .............................................. 12
      2.2.3 Summary ............................................................................................................ 15
  2.4 Disciplinary exclusion: The demographics ................................................................. 15
      2.4.1 Who experiences disciplinary exclusion? ............................................................. 16
      2.4.2 Non-compliance resulting in disciplinary exclusion ............................................. 17
      2.4.3 Issues of data validity and accuracy .................................................................... 18
      2.4.4 Summary ............................................................................................................ 18
2.5 Impacts of disciplinary exclusion ............................................................................................................. 19
  2.5.1 The intent and effectiveness of disciplinary exclusion ........................................................................... 19
  2.5.2 Psychosocial impacts of disciplinary exclusion ..................................................................................... 20
  2.5.3 Educational impacts of disciplinary exclusion ........................................................................................ 21
  2.5.4 Family impacts of disciplinary exclusion ............................................................................................... 22
  2.5.5 Conclusion .............................................................................................................................................. 23
  2.6 Preventing disciplinary exclusion: Some alternatives .................................................................................. 23
    2.6.1 Guidelines for disciplinary exclusion ................................................................................................. 24
    2.6.2 Pre-service teacher training ................................................................................................................ 24
    2.6.3 Behaviour crisis response service ...................................................................................................... 25
    2.6.4 Home-schooling ............................................................................................................................... 25
    2.6.5 School-wide Positive Behaviour for Learning .................................................................................... 25
    2.6.6 Restorative practices ........................................................................................................................ 26
    2.6.7 Managed moves .................................................................................................................................. 26
    2.6.8 Alternative education ......................................................................................................................... 27
    2.6.9 Improved relationships between teachers, students and their families ............................................. 27
    2.6.10 Engaging and invigorating curriculum ............................................................................................. 28
    2.6.11 Student voice ..................................................................................................................................... 28
    2.6.12 Summary ............................................................................................................................................ 29
  2.7 Limitations of disciplinary exclusion ......................................................................................................... 29
  2.9 Rationale for this study .................................................................................................................................. 30
  2.10 Research questions ..................................................................................................................................... 30
  2.11 Conclusion .................................................................................................................................................. 31

Chapter Three: Methodology ............................................................................................................................ 32
  3.0 Introduction .................................................................................................................................................. 32
  3.1 Methodology ................................................................................................................................................ 32
    3.1.1 Social constructionism ....................................................................................................................... 32
3.1.2 Qualitative research ............................................................................................................. 33
3.1.3 Interpretivism and phenomenology .................................................................................... 33
3.2 Methods ...................................................................................................................................... 35
3.2.1 Focus group interviews ........................................................................................................ 35
3.2.2 Participants .......................................................................................................................... 36
3.2.3 Data collection ..................................................................................................................... 38
3.2.4 Data analysis ........................................................................................................................ 39
3.3 Ethical and cross-cultural considerations ................................................................................... 40
3.4 Conclusion ................................................................................................................................... 42

Chapter Four: Findings .......................................................................................................................... 43
4.0 Introduction ................................................................................................................................ 43
4.1 Reflections on factors that contributed to their exclusion from school ..................................... 43
  4.1.1 Theme 1: Reflections on personal factors ........................................................................... 43
  4.1.2 Reflections on classroom factors ......................................................................................... 52
  4.1.3 Reflections on school factors ............................................................................................... 59
4.2 Summary ..................................................................................................................................... 67

Chapter Five: Discussion ....................................................................................................................... 69
5.0 Introduction ................................................................................................................................ 69
5.1 Insights into possibilities ............................................................................................................. 69
  5.1.1 Possibilities for school culture and systems ................................................................. 70
  5.1.2 Possibilities for classrooms, teachers and pedagogy .................................................... 77
  5.1.4 Conclusions ....................................................................................................................... 80
5.2 Implications of findings ............................................................................................................... 80
  5.2.1 Implications for schools. ................................................................................................. 81
  5.2.2 Implications for teachers and pedagogy .......................................................................... 81
  5.2.3 The complexities involved in preventing disciplinary exclusions ....................................... 82
  5.2.4 Conclusions ....................................................................................................................... 82
List of figures

Figure 1. New Zealand stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions and expulsions, 2011-2015 2